

Romans 7:14–25 (NKJV)

¹⁴ For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. ¹⁵ For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. ¹⁶ If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that *it is* good. ¹⁷ But now, *it is* no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. ¹⁸ For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but *how* to perform what is good I do not find. ¹⁹ For the good that I will *to do*, I do not do; but the evil I will not *to do*, that I practice. ²⁰ Now if I do what I will not *to do*, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. ²¹ I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. ²² For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. ²³ But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. ²⁴ O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? ²⁵ I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.

Romans 7:14-15 is one of the classic passages of Romans, often read by people who never read the whole book and often quoted as a part of Bible lessons or sermons. The reason for this is simple. The _____, predicament, difficulty, even anguish that Paul describes here is the common experience of _____ believer. This struggle is our struggle. This problem is our problem.

To properly understand the problem let us ask a few questions that are often debated among students of Romans:

1. Who is speaking?

This passage, like many others throughout the book of Romans is written in the _____ person, and the unquestioned author is the Apostle Paul. But to many, this does not sound like Paul. In fact, some will say, this does not sound like a man who is _____. Could Paul be saying “I” like in the using of the first person as a _____ device to make a point or teach a lesson? Is this really Paul?

The answer is _____. Paul is speaking. This is his testimony. There is absolutely nothing in the text to indicate that someone else is speaking or that Paul has taken on the personage of an actor or is speaking for another person. The only reason to conclude that this is not Paul speaking is because it does not fit one’s _____, developed apart from this passage and others like it. But a theology that does not fit all the Scriptures is _____. Jesus said, “The Scripture cannot be _____.” _____ part of Scripture is the Word of God. Every part does not reveal _____ truth, but every part is truth. A correct understanding of Scripture encompasses _____ part.

The struggle here described was the struggle of that great apostle, and here we see another of the precious qualities of Scripture that make it “more to be desired than _____.” (Ps. 19:9) We see the complete _____ of God’s Word, revealing the unsightly battle raging in the life of one who might be labeled the second most noble example mentioned on its pages. The second thing we see that so endears the Bible to us is that the Holy Spirit would inspire the great apostle to be so transparent about his _____ conflict. The Spirit could have used any writer to teach us the principles given in Romans that we need to know connected to this struggle.

He did not have to use Paul. But He did. And the fact that He did helps us. Because we think, “If Paul had this struggle, and made it through; I can face this battle, and make it through as well!”

The second question debated by Bible students is

2. Is Paul speaking of his life before he was saved or after he was saved?

In the previous passage of Romans, chapter 7, verses 7 to 13, Paul was clearly speaking of the _____, making reference to things before his conversion. However, this was exceedingly clear because Paul used the past tense. But in these verses, Paul uses the _____ tense; and the text is equally clear that he is talking about his present life, that which he is living at the time of writing this letter to the Romans. As we saw in our study of chapter 1, Romans was written while Paul was on his _____ missionary journey while he was in the city of _____. Not only is this after Paul’s salvation, he is a _____ Christian and seasoned apostle.

3. Is Paul writing during a period in which he has fallen back into gross carnality such as he accused the Corinthians of remaining in?

1 Corinthians 3:1–4 And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual *people* but as to _____, as to babes in Christ. ² I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able *to receive it*, and even now you are still not able; ³ for you are still carnal. For where *there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?* ⁴ For when one says, “I am of Paul,” and another, “I *am* of Apollos,” are you not carnal?

The answer is _____. Paul is not writing at a time that, though he is saved he is acting like he is lost, which is characteristic of those who are carnal. If we had been quiet observers of Paul’s life in Corinth while he was in the process of writing this very chapter, we would have noticed nothing wrong or unusual about the apostle. His _____ for Christ remained clear; his love for the Lord unquestioned; his service to Christ _____.

What Paul declares to us in these words, we probably would have never known, even if we had been there. Paul is talking about an _____ struggle, a war within his very being. This was a battle as he describes it between his _____, which was fully in love with Christ and devoted to God’s law, and the _____ of his body that still felt the powerful tug of sin upon them. This was a perpetual war that actually began after he was saved between his new _____ man that was the result of his salvation and the remnants of the old _____ man that had once been enslaved to sin. That _____ man was no longer enslaved, but after years of being dominated by sin, still had an old inclination to do sin’s bidding.

Paul’s depiction of this struggle comes in four sections, each with three parts. To help us see the pattern and relationships, they are presented in a chart below.

	7:14-17	7:18-20	7:21-23	7:24-25
DESCRIPTION	For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. (7:14)	For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; (7:18a)	I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. (7:21)	O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? (7:24)
EXAMPLE	For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. (7:15)	for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. (7:18b-19)	For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, (7:22-23a)	INTERJECTION I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! (7:25a)
EXPLANATION	If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. (7:16-17)	Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. (7:20)	and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. (7:23b)	So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin. (7:25b)

We will better understand the conflict Paul is describing and that every Christian experiences if we take each of the three parts and examine them in light of all four sections simultaneously rather than individually.

DESCRIPTION	For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. (7:14)	For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; (7:18a)	I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. (7:21)	O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? (7:24)
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Paul says, “The problem is not with the law; **the law is** _____ – good, holy, right. The problem is that I still have a **carnal**, _____ existence, a humanness, the same one that used to be in total _____ to **sin**. And I know that there is **nothing good** in **my flesh**, in my old humanness, in the “_____ man.” I have discovered a **law**, a _____, here. While I **will to do good** (I want to in the depths of my being), **evil**, sin, still resides _____ **me**.”

And Paul declares, “This conflict inside of my body makes me _____ **wretched**. **Who will deliver**, _____, me out of this **body** where sin still resides producing _____?”

Is this not the struggle of every Christian? We are saved by grace through faith, and God begins to sanctify us (make us _____) and change us, making us more and more like the Lord Jesus. But even as that happens we feel as if there were an _____ affixed to one leg so that as we journey down our path toward Christlikeness, something is ever present to hinder us, to cause us to stumble. We look behind us for the rope and the object that is attached that slows our progress and impedes the steps toward godliness that in the depths of our being we really do want to take. We love the Lord; we want to be more like Him. We want to progress on this journey and be more like our dear Savior Himself.

So we look for this object that delays us, feeling as it does attached and dragging. But we look in _____. There is _____ external anchor nor any rope tied to the ankle connecting us and it. But we feel it. It slows us. It causes us to move in _____ motions toward Christ rather than running free and fast. Where is it? I cannot see it; but I always feel it.

And then it dawns on me. The problem is _____ of me, in my _____.

EXAMPLE	For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. (7:15)	for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. (7:18b-19)	For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, (7:22-23a)	INTERJECTION I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! (7:25a)
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Paul now gives a very _____ example of the problem he just described. Notice that this part of each of the first three sections begins with “_____...” The fourth section is different because Paul interjects an answer he has raised in describing the problem in the fourth section, and we will examine that in a little while.

Paul testifies, “There is a _____ inside of me, in the **inward man**. I do **not** fully **understand** it. There are things in the _____ **man** that I really want to do, things that are in accord with **the law of God**. But although I want to do them, I do not _____ do them. The **will** to do these good things sometimes does not move from my _____ to my **members**, so the **good** things do not get done.

He continues, “And it is not only that good things that I **will to do** do _____ get done, but bad things, things I really hate in my heart, find a way to get done by those selfsame **members** of my body! That is what makes me want to get out of this **wretched** _____. **Thank God! Our Lord Jesus Christ** is going to one day take me out of this body and I will experience this conflict no longer.

This is _____ testimony, but it could be mine. Couldn't it be yours as well? This is a struggle each of us face daily, and it is not a struggle that decreases with spiritual _____ or Christlikeness. In fact, the more we know of Christ and the more we are made to be like Christ, the more we _____ of the holiness of God and the perfection of His standards. This contrasts with a more _____ appraisal of our own lives and helps us see more clearly the gulf that remains between our character and the character of our Lord.

As noted above, Paul does not write this while in his spiritual _____ nor during a time of backsliding. In comparison to other Christians, Paul was a spiritual _____ by this time. But Paul did not compare himself with other Christians. He compared himself only to _____. And Paul's growth in the Lord sharpened his own spiritual vision so that Paul could see that compared to the Person of Christ, the great Paul was a spiritual _____, and inside this one that others regarded as their hero of the faith, there remained a war between the _____, ever being made more like the mind of Christ, and his _____, the parts of his body that still would sometimes look at things he ought not to see and do things he ought not to do.

EXPLANATION	If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. (7:16-17)	Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. (7:20)	and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. (7:23b)	So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin. (7:25b)
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Having described his struggle and offering to us a painful example of what he experiences, Paul (at the inspiration of the Spirit, remember) gives to us an explanation. This explanation will help us to understand the _____ which is given in chapter 8. The solution will not _____ the struggle, or else Paul would not have to be writing about it in the present tense, but the solution will minimize the negative consequences of the struggle.

At first glance, Paul's explanation sounds like a "cop out." It sounds as if he is saying, "Hey, I am not _____ for any evil I do; sin is doing it and I cannot help it." Paul is not saying that at all. He is trying to _____ what is happening which lays the foundation for the solution in the next passage. Here is what is happening:

The Bible, mostly through Paul's own writings but not exclusively, offers several contrasts that help us to understand what Paul is explaining. Some of these contrasts are even referenced in this passage.

The _____ verses the Spirit

The old man verses the _____ man

The members verses the _____

The _____ man verses the inward man

Consider just a couple of these passages outside of Romans.

Galatians 5:16–26 (NKJV) I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the _____ lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. ¹⁹ Now the works of the _____ are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, ²¹ envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told *you* in

time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²² But the fruit of the _____ is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. ²⁴ And those *who are Christ's* have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

Ephesians 4:17–24 (NKJV) This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, ¹⁸ having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; ¹⁹ who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. ²⁰ But you have not so learned Christ, ²¹ if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: ²² that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the _____ which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, ²³ and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, ²⁴ and that you put on the _____ which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

The internal war rages on, and it will as long as a Christian lives in the old body that was once a slave to sin. But although the Christian cannot do away with the struggle, he does not have to be _____ by it. He can walk in _____. The flesh, the old man, the members of the body will keep on tugging to let sin have its way; but when we _____ to the Spirit, He can subdue the flesh, put off the old man, and bring the members into _____ to allow us to walk in newness of life.

Romans 8 gives us more detail about the “how.”

Romans 8:1-8

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. (8:1-4)

For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so; and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. (8:5-8)

For at least three reasons, God is justified in His condemnation of sinners. First, He is justified because _____ men, through their lineage from Adam, share in the guilt of original sin and in the _____ and _____ depravity it produces.

Second, God is justified in condemning sinners because every person is _____ with an _____ nature.

Third, God is justified in condemning sinners because of the _____ their depraved natures inevitably _____.

In itself, even the coming to earth of the Lord Jesus Christ, God incarnate, could _____ that condemnation. Jesus' perfect teaching and sinless life actually _____ the condemnation of those who heard and saw Him.

Such is the condition of _____ individual born into the world, and it is in light of that _____ condition that Paul proclaims in Romans 8:1-4 the unspeakably wonderful truth about those who, by _____ working through _____, belong to Jesus Christ.

In presenting God's salvation promise to _____, Paul focuses on its _____, no condemnation (v. 1a); its _____, justification (vv. 1b-2); its _____, substitution (v. 3); and its _____, sanctification (v. 4).

THE REALITY OF FREEDOM – NO CONDEMNATION

1^a There is therefore now no condemnation

THE REASON FOR FREEDOM – JUSTIFICATION

1^{b-2} for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.

God's provision of _____ came not through Christ's perfect _____ or through His perfect _____ but through His perfect _____ on the cross. It is through Christ's death, not His life, that God provides the _____ of salvation. For those who place their _____ in Christ and in what He has done on their behalf **there is therefore now _____ condemnation.**

Jesus _____ and _____ paid the debt of sin and the penalty of the law (which is _____ to death) for every person who _____ asks for mercy and trusts in Him.

It is extremely important to realize that _____ from condemnation is not based in the least measure on any form of _____ achieved by the believer. He does not _____ the _____ eradication of sin during his _____ life.

Nevertheless, there is still no condemnation – because the _____ for all the _____ of his life has been paid in Christ and applied by _____.

The divine condemnation from which believers are exonerated (8:1a) is without exception or qualification. It is bestowed on **those who are _____ Christ Jesus**, in other words, on every _____ Christian.

The key to every aspect of _____ is in the simple but infinitely profound phrase **in Christ Jesus**. A _____ is a person who is **in Christ Jesus**.

The _____ there is no condemnation for believers: **the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.**

The _____ that Christ gives is complete and permanent deliverance from sin's _____ and _____ (and ultimately from its presence). It also gives the _____ to _____ God.

In speaking of the _____ of life in Christ Jesus, Paul is referring to the _____ Spirit. The Christian's _____ is set on the _____ of the Spirit (v. 6) and is indwelt and given _____ by the Holy Spirit.

It is the Holy Spirit who bestows and energizes spiritual _____ in the person who places his trust in Christ Jesus. Paul could not be talking of any spirit but the Holy Spirit, because only _____ Holy Spirit can bring _____ to a heart that is _____.

During his earthly life, the Christian will always have _____ weaknesses from his _____ humanness. No matter how closely he _____ with the Lord.

But the Christian is no longer a _____ to sin as he _____ was, no longer under sin's _____ and _____. Now he is _____ from sin's _____ and its _____.

THE ROUTE TO FREEDOM – SUBSTITUTION

³ For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh,

The Law can _____ sin in men and _____ them for it, but it cannot _____ them from its penalty.

Although it is “_____ and _____ and _____” (Rom. 7:12), the Law could not save men from sin because it was weak...through the flesh. The sinful _____ of the flesh made the Law _____ to save men.

God's law commands _____, but it cannot provide the _____ to achieve that righteousness. Therefore, what the _____ was _____ to do for _____ man, God _____ did.

THE RESULT TO FREEDOM – SANCTIFICATION

⁴ in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those

who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so; and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. (8: 5-8)

Those who _____ in Christ not only are _____ from the penalty of sin but also are _____ for the first time to _____ God's righteous _____.

The _____ Christian has both the _____ and the divinely-imparted _____ to live righteously while he is _____ on earth.

Because the Christian has been _____ of sin and been given God's own _____ nature _____ him, he now longs for and is _____ to live a life of _____.

It is God's great desire that believers live out the perfect _____ that He reckons to them when they are _____ – that they live like _____ children and no longer like the children of the _____ and of Satan.

Righteousness is the very _____ of salvation.

In God's eyes, there are only two kinds of _____ in the world, those who _____ belong to Him and those _____.

Those who are _____ to the _____ are the unsaved, the unforgiven, the unredeemed, the unregenerate. Those who are _____ to the _____ are the saved, the forgiven, the redeemed, the regenerated children of God.

Paul does not say that the mind set on the flesh _____ to death, but that it _____ death.

But the mind set on the Spirit is _____ and _____.

Every _____ person, whether _____ or _____, whether outwardly _____ or outwardly _____, is hostile toward God. An _____ person cannot live a _____ and _____ life because he has no _____ and _____ nature or resources. It clearly follows, then, that if the fleshly mind _____ and _____ subject itself to the law of _____, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.